SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
REMARKS AT THE MIDDLE EAST POLICY COUNCIL
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MR. MCGOVERN: Good morning, everyone. I'm George McGovern. This is the sixth in a series of conferences that we have sponsored here on Capitol Hill dealing with the various issues that relate to the Middle East.

For those of you who have not been to previous sessions, the Middle East Policy Council, which I head, is a non-profit, public interest group that seeks to provide an objective educational forum for issues relating to the Middle East. We do this through conferences of this kind, through the Middle East Policy Quarterly, through teacher workshops, background and commentary for the media, and so on. We operate with a small staff headed by Vice President Anne Joyce; the editor of our Journal, Richard Wilson; and Dr. Thomas Mattair, our policy analyst; Mary Lee Ball, program associate.

Today we're going to turn our attention to American security concerns in the Gulf area, which has been so much in the news in recent months, especially since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

We're fortunate today to have the secretary of Defense with us as our speaker. He holds a B.S. and M.S. degrees from Stanford University, and a PhD from Penn State. He's held high positions in the corporate world, as well as in the Department of Defense over the years. I remember when I was here as a senator the first time I heard about Dr. Perry I was concerned about a particular weapon system which I discussed with the late Senator Jackson, and he said, "Well, I've got some questions about that, too. We have Bill Perry coming up here to testify. He's the smartest guy in the Pentagon and we'll get some straight answers out of him."

I share the high regard of my colleagues, former colleagues in the United States Senate for the secretary of Defense. I think he's a man of unusual wisdom and judgment and experience. So I'm very pleased, Mr. Secretary, to present you to this audience. (Applause.)

SEC. PERRY: Thank you very much, Senator McGovern, for that generous introduction.

Fifty-three years ago today, Japan made a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States entered World War II. It is important for us to remember today the heroism and the courage shown by those who died at Pearl Harbor on that day of infamy. The attack was swift, brutal and without warning. But in the words of an officer aboard the USS West Virginia, "throughout the action there was never the slightest sign of faltering or cowardice. There was no panic, no shirking nor flinching, and words fail to describe the truly magnificent display of courage, discipline and devotion to duty of all."

So today we remember those who fell at Pearl Harbor. The bell that tolled for them that day also proclaimed the beginning of a new era in American security policy, an era that has lasted for 50 years. And during this era, our security objectives were relatively straightforward and easy to state. Going just before that era in World War II, we were facing totalitarian states bent on world domination, and our objective was easy to state, it was total victory, and we used all of

the military power available to us to achieve that, including nuclear weapons, which we were just developing. Later, during the Cold War, we faced a different problem, but our objective was also easy to state, it was to deter an attack by the Soviet Union, thereby preventing a nuclear holocaust, and all of our military power was dedicated to achieving that objective.

Today the world is very different. The Soviet Union, which dominated almost every aspect of America's security strategy, is gone. In its place, new countries have been born all over Eurasia, and across the globe ethnicity, which Daniel Moynihan once called the "great hidden force of our age," is no longer hidden. It rips old states apart and causes the sometimes violent birth of new states.

In short, these past few years have changed the security equation all around the world. And unlike World War II or unlike the Cold War, most of the current and foreseeable threats to our interests do not threaten the actual survival of the United States. And, therefore, there is no general consensus on how we should use our military force.

So today I'm going to be talking about how we decide on the use of military force, and I'm going to illustrate that discussion by applying it to past, present and future applications in the Persian Gulf. I want to show why we think the area of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf is an area where the United States has vital interests at stake that are worth using force, if necessary, to protect.

Now, our vital interests are at stake if we have a threat to the survival of the United States or its allies or if it poses a critical challenge to our economic interests or if it poses the danger of a future nuclear threat. Those are the categories in which we consider that a threat affects the vital national security interests of the United States and therefore is demanding of the willingness to use military force.

Now, I should emphasize that, even in that case, in protecting our vital interests, our first recourse is always deterrence -- that is, it's always preventive diplomacy. But if preventive diplomacy fails, we move to what I call coercive diplomacy. Diplomacy backed by the threat of military force. Oliver Cromwell once said that the best ambassador is a man at war. He was seeming to suggest that we make diplomacy through military force.

I don't subscribe to that view, but I do believe that diplomacy can be most effective when military force is used in its service. And so that's what I mean by coercive diplomacy, diplomacy in which military force is at its service.

When our vital interests are threatened, we have to be prepared to use and to threaten to use military force. And that means we must have the military capability and the demonstrated will to use force to put an end to the threat. Now, nowhere -- nowhere in the world -- does the United States more clearly have vital interests at stake than in the Persian Gulf.

First of all, the survival of some of our key security partners in this area is endangered by those who seem implacably opposed to peace with their neighbors. At the forefront, of course, are Iran and Iraq -- radical states that are rivals in almost everything but agree on one point, which is their pursuit of policies and agendas against our interests. Iran and Iraq also pose very serious threats to Israel and to our principal Arab partners, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other moderate Gulf states.

In addition to that, two of the world's most dangerous proliferation threats, again Iran and Iraq, are in the Persian Gulf. These states and other states in the region also have, or are developing, chemical weapons, biological weapons and ballistic missile systems.

The third reason we consider our vital national security interests are involved in the Mideast and the Persian Gulf is we recognize that any threat to Gulf security endangers critical economic interests of the United States. Our paramount economic interest in the Gulf is access to the energy resources of the region. Nearly two- thirds of the world's proven petroleum reserves lie in the Persian Gulf.

And if you put this in perspective, there are five nations in the Gulf, each of which has more oil reserves than all of North America combined. Clearly, the control of the Gulf oil fields by a hostile stage would allow it to blackmail the industrial world and threaten the health of the world economy.

For all of these reasons, Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait could not be permitted to stand. And, of course, thanks to the forceful response by the United States and our allies, it did not.

The immediate and the tangible results of the Gulf War were impressive. We liberated Kuwait and its people from the terror of Iraqi occupation. We protected Saudi Arabia. We crippled Iraq's program to develop weapons of mass destruction. And the cease-fire terms imposed the strictest arms control regime in history on those same programs. We also prevented Saddam Hussein from controlling the oil fields of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, thereby putting him in the position to blackmail the rest of the world. And finally, we dramatically reduced Iraq's war-fighting capability.

Those are all tangible and easy-to-measure achievements, results, of that war, but it also accomplished at least two other things that are much harder to define and less tangible. First of all, it demonstrated the credibility of our word and our war-fighting ability. We made a commitment and we followed through. And after 1991, no potential aggressor anywhere in the world can doubt America's military ability. We effectively and decisively protected against threats to our vital interest.

Secondly, that war provided a window of opportunity to achieve a degree of peace between Israel and its neighbors. We are not there yet, by a long shot, but the war did break the logjam. It undermined the credibility of the radical, rejectionist states who were left isolated and defeated. And it destroyed their image as the leaders of the Arab world, and it destroyed their ability to impose their radical policies on moderate states. And finally, it allowed our coalition partners to pursue new and positive policies.

The military accomplishments of Desert Storm are even more impressive when one realizes the baseline from which we were operating. When Iraq marched into Kuwait, we had not significant military presence in the region, and it took us months to build one. For a significant period after Iraq took Kuwait, the only U.S. ground forces in place defending Saudi Arabia were two brigades of paratroopers, very lightly armed paratroopers, not nearly enough to have prevented Iraq from marching in. It took us months to ship the equipment our forces needed for a solid, confident defense, and months more to build up an offensive capability. We also had no agreed-upon strategy with any of our Gulf partners for dealing with the situation, and it took months again for the United States to build the coalition and gain the coalition's approval of the strategy that eventually won the war. A significant amount of spade work was required simply to negotiate with the Gulf states the terms for the entry and the operation of U.S. forces.

Now, contrast the effort it took us to get forces in place in 1990 with the more recent events of this past October. On the evening of October the 6th, General Shalikashvili came into my office and laid a set of photographs down on my desk. For several weeks before that, we had been hearing bellicose commentary about what Iraq would do if it did not see progress towards lifting the sanctions. The pictures I looked at that night, imagery collected by U.S. national reconnaissance assets, showed that elements of two Republican Guard armored divisions had moved from their garrisons in the north and the center of the country, and they were taking up positions less than an hour's drive from the Kuwaiti border. The pattern of their deployment was strikingly similar to that of the assault units before the 1990 invasion of Kuwait. What's more, we could see that they had brought with them their ammunition, their artillery and their support, everything needed to launch a new offensive into Kuwait. And we could see that further reinforcements were gathering in the north to move south.

To this day, it is still not clear what Saddam Hussein was up to. Did he really mean to attack Kuwait again? Or was it all a crude attempt to pressure the U.N. Security Council into backing down on its sanctions. Whatever his rationale, it was not a routine exercise. No army takes a full load of combat ammunition on a routine exercise, and what it clearly was was a blatant violation of the original cease-fire terms.

Whatever our interpretation of what he was up to, we came to an immediate conclusion that we could not stand idly by. We had to

act, had to act quickly and we had to act decisively. The president therefore ordered a massive reinforcement of U.S. forces in the region.

One day later, on October the 7th -- one day after seeing those pictures -- we sent an aircraft carrier into the Red Sea and moved an afloat Marine expeditionary unit into the Persian Gulf. On October the 8th we ordered the deployment of a number of air, ground and naval units and put even more on alert. Within five days the first heavy -- that is, the first armored -- U.S. forces were on the ground and ready to fight, and a few days later the United States had more than three times as many combat aircraft in the Gulf as it had when the crisis started. A mechanized brigade was in place and another en route, along with more Marines. Including the units on alert, the United States was poised to place over 150,000 military personnel into the region.

One lesson that we have learned is that it is futile to send an adversary like Saddam Hussein ambiguous signals. Only a credible, ready-to-fight force provides the muscle to back up coercive diplomacy. This time it worked. Iraq's forces returned to the garrisons. I'd like to draw some lessons from that and look a little bit to the future.

The most obvious and important difference between what happened in the Gulf in 1990 and 1994 was that in 1990 we had to go to war to stop the Iraqi aggression and in 1994 the threat from Iraq was stopped before a shot was fired. The simplest and the most basic reason for this was the impact of the military and diplomatic steps we took between 1991 and 1994 to increase our ability to respond in a crisis.

First of all, we had over 70 combat or combat support aircraft already deployed in the theater enforcing the no-fly zone in southern Iraq. These not only gave us a strong and a credible, well-trained deterrent force already in the region, they also gave us the real time intelligence assets on Iraqi movements -- something we did not have in 1990.

Secondly, we had a forward-based U.S. headquarters which gave us a command and control element already in the region.

Third, we had enough equipment prepositioned in Kuwait for an entire Army brigade of tanks and mechanized infantry, and that is why we could move so quickly to getting armored capability in the field and deployed in 1994 as opposed to 1990. It was with this equipment that the first arriving units married up. They flew in direct from Fort Stewart, got into buses, and within an hour were driving their tanks away from the depot in Kuwait. We also had equipment for an additional brigade prepositioned on ships in Diego Garcia, which were on the way to the Gulf.

The fourth difference was over the last three years, American air, sea and ground forces have engaged in numerous training exercises in the Gulf theater, preparing for just the type of scenario that we faced in October.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this time we had a strategy in place in advance, a strategy agreed upon between the U.S. and our allies both inside and outside the Gulf. Through our efforts and their own efforts, our Gulf allies are better prepared today to defend themselves. We have involved them in our defense planning, we've secured their agreement to assume a greater responsibility, including financial responsibility, for their own defense. For example, this time Kuwait had a mechanized brigade on the border facing the Iraqi troops, three days after I looked at that photograph. Contrast that in 1990 when they never took their forces out of garrison.

And we have agreements in place with all of our Gulf allies, governing the operation, or potential operation of our forces in their countries. The end result of all of this is that we were able to put in theater the men and equipment for two brigades of heavy, mechanized infantry in 1994 in about the same time that it took us to deploy two paratrooper brigades in 1990. ' We had over 200 combat -- or combat support aircraft in theatre in a week. The end result then, was that the most immediate threat was thwarted in about eight days. And most importantly, in the end result, was that not a shot was fired, and not a single life; American, Kuwaiti, Saudi or Iraqi was lost. In short, the Gulf in 1990 and 1991 was a prime example of America's ability to fight a war. And the Gulf in 1994 it was a prime example of Americas ability to prevent a war.

Well, that worked, but we do not want to allow Saddam to force us to deploy forces any time he elects armored brigades down to the Kuwaiti border. So, to prevent this we have taken a number of steps. First we have told Iraq that our interpretation of the latest security Council resolution, Is that it strictly forbids Iraq from enhancing it's military capabilities south of the 32nd parallel. This means that Iraq knows that it faces an immediate and a forceful response if it violates that resolution. And we have put the forces in place to do it.

We will base almost double the number of combat and combat support air raft in the Gulf as we did before the most recent crisis. And including in this package will be a number of A-10 aircraft, specifically designed to attack tanks. This means we will be in a much better shape to strike ground targets, not just take out aircraft. We will also seek to pre-position more equipment in the area than we already have, in particular equipment for two additional mechanized brigades.

Much remains to be done. For instance, we need to redouble our efforts to promote better defense cooperation among the Gulf States through such things as joint exercises and improving the combatability of our forces.

In the long run, we should always be looking for ways to reduce our economic dependence on the region by seeking alternative energy sources, for example. And we should always be looking for ways to get our partners in the region and our allies in Europe and the Pacific to shoulder a greater share of the burden of protecting our common interests in the Persian Gulf.

In the end, however, where vital interests are at stake, the United States must be prepared to do whatever is necessary to protect them. We should never get in the habit of rattling our saber in response to every difficult situation, but like those aboard the USS West Virginia 53 years ago today, we cannot falter, panic, shirk nor flinch when our vital interests are truly threatened.

The Persian Gulf meets that test. The region is a prime example of why it is so important to have ready, prepared forces to back up our diplomacy. Our response to Iraq's most recent moves shows that we have those forces today and that we have the will to use those forces whenever necessary.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. MCGOVERN: Thank you very much. Would you take a few questions?

Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

As we announced earlier, we'd been collecting written questions for Dr. Perry. He's on a tight schedule, but we're going to go as far as we can.

The first one -- as you pointed out, U.S. credibility is an essential component of U.S. national security interests. Has that credibility been eroded since it was demonstrated in the Gulf by developments in Bosnia?

SEC. PERRY: No. I don't think the situations are at all comparable. We have not, first of all, defined Bosnia as a vital national security interest of the United States. We have not committed U.S. forces to the war in Bosnia. Our role in Bosnia is assisting NATO, which in turn is providing support for a U.N. peacekeeping operation. Our involvement there is in a peacekeeping operation, not in a combat operation. The situations are entirely different.

MR. MCGOVERN: The second question. Doesn't dual containment risk driving Iran and Iraq together into a potentially very strong alliance?

SEC. PERRY: That's a very good question. The answer, of course, there is that risk. Historically, the antagonism between the two countries has been so great that they have not been able to take advantage of that (to) this point.

I think you -- we all understand that one of the reasons that President Bush decided not to push U.S. forces any farther than he did at the time of Desert Storm was he did want to destroy Iraq as a nation and thereby create a power vacuum which would be to the benefit of Iran. But this is a very delicate balance in that part of the world and it will continue to be a problem in the future. I think the question raised -- is that a risk of a policy, dual containment -- yes, it's a risk we're taking and I believe we'll continue to take.

MR. MCGOVERN: What is the position of the Department of Defense on the sale of diesel submarines built in the United States to foreign governments?

SEC. PERRY: To this point I have not -- and the United States government has not -- supported building diesel submarines to sell overseas. Other countries are selling diesel submarines, including Russia selling them to Iran. We have made very strong representations to Russia urging them not to do that. But I'm not in favor, do not support the sale of U.S. submarines to other countries.

MR. MCGOVERN: Okay, this question reads, will current levels of military and economic aid be sustained for Egypt and Israel? And the questioner suggests a forward period of five or ten years, will it be sustained at the present level?

SEC. PERRY: I think I would defer that question to Secretary Christopher the next time he talks with you. That's not exactly my area of responsibility.

MR. MCGOVERN: Do you believe that water may soon become the key resource dividing the Middle Eastern nations in the near future?

SEC. PERRY: No. I believe energy is the key resource. For one reason, if you have enough energy, you can make water. There's plenty of water in the world, it's just a matter of getting in a potable condition, and there are many ways of converting impure water and salt water, sea water, into potable water, all of them use energy. And the key, the fundamental, I think, is energy, not water, because with energy, you can make water.

MR. MCGOVERN: Mr. Secretary, what is your own view of the wisdom or lack thereof of stationing U.S. soldiers on the Golan Heights? And the questioner raises the question whether the risks are acceptable, whether there might be some better alternative such as U.N. forces.

SEC. PERRY: I couldn't comment intelligently on that question without knowing precisely -- without knowing in somewhat more detail what the proposal was. We do not have at this point a proposal from Israel and Syria to use -- to have U.S. forces on the Golan Heights. We have indicated a willingness to support a peace agreement reached by Israel and Syria, and we have indicated a willingness to consider the inclusion of peace-keeping forces on the Golan Heights as part of that. But as I stand here, though, I have -- I do not know what the size of that force would be, what the missions would be, or whether, indeed, when it comes right down to it, the two nations are going to ask us to do that. So I cannot comment more -- in a more informed way on it.

MR. MCGOVERN: Is the United States prepared to consider lifting sanctions against Iraq if Saddam Hussein is overthrown?

SEC. PERRY: The United States is prepared to consider lifting sanction against Iraq whenever Iraq complies with the resolutions of the UN Security Council. Those involve a whole series of actions which Iraq has to take, one of which has to do with weapons -- curtailing weapons of mass destruction, others of which have to do with reparations to Kuwait. It's a long and complicated set of resolutions. Compliance with those resolutions would be the basis for the United States recognizing Iraq.

MR. MCGOVERN: After the Gulf war, the Bush administration announced an initiative for the security in the Gulf. Almost four years later, does the U.S. intend to take an active role in promoting security in the Gulf that goes beyond the bilateral arrangements with individual states?

SEC. PERRY: We have worked with many states in the region on security issues, both bilaterally and through the Gulf Cooperation Council. I would not suggest to you that the security arrangements that have been reached are fully satisfactory. I think we will continue to work in that regard. My immediate interest is advancing -- is in continuing the progress that was made between 1991 and 1994 in preparing for mutual security in that region. I mentioned in my paper several specific issues, one of which was the placing of more prepositioned equipment in the area, and the second of which would be participation in joint exercises in the area. These would be multilateral joint exercises, not bilateral.

MR. MCGOVERN: Mr. Secretary, you've spoken of the importance of using diplomacy with military force at its service. Where do economic sanctions fit into this equation? What are the things that Iraq must do in order for the U.S. government to call for lifting of sanctions, and could this be done while Saddam remains in power?

SEC. PERRY: On the second question, my answer is the same as it was before; compliance with the U.N. Security Council resolutions would be required for the United States to support the lifting of the sanctions.

What was the first part of the question again, George?

MR. MCGOVERN: Where do economic sanctions fit into this equation?

SEC. PERRY: Oh, yeah. Economic sanctions is a part of coercive diplomacy, along with the threat of military force. I think the most salutary example of where both of them were combined was not in the Mideast but in North Korea, where last June, in the face of North Korea's threat to begin reprocessing fuel from the nuclear reactor which would have been sufficient to have generated enough plutonium for four or five nuclear bombs, in response to that threat we threatened two actions, one of which was the imposition of economic sanctions, and secondly, we were in the process of augmenting our military forces in the Korean peninsula. It was in the face of both of those threats, this course of diplomacy, you might say, that North Korea then came back with a proposal which led to the talks which finally led to the framework agreement, which is an agreement on the part of North Korea to in time to dismantle this nuclear weapon program. And most importantly, it led to an agreement in the framework agreement to stop immediately the programs they had underway for processing fuel and for reloading their reactor. So it froze the program. It stopped it in place. There was a very important diplomatic initiative to get that resolved, but that diplomatic initiative was preceded by both the threat of economic sanctions and the threat of military -- augmentation of our military forces. And I would call that the course of diplomacy.

MR. MCGOVERN: Mr. Secretary, the Defense Department's so-called bottom-up review is, in effect, as much a statement of foreign policy as a military strategy. Did the State Department have any input, and specifically did they concur in the concept of unilateral U.S. intervention?

SEC. PERRY: The -- not only the State Department, but the whole Cabinet as a matter of fact, the whole national security component of the Cabinet, was briefed on the bottom-up review both during the preparation of the review and in the final form of it. And when the president made the decision to endorse the bottom-up review it was made not by myself; it was made by the present, and it was made with the full concurrence of Secretary Christopher, the national security advisor, the secretary of energy, and indeed the key Cabinet members.

So the answer is yes. Both during the preparation of the bottom- up review there were frequent consultations and briefings to numerous departments, particularly the State Department, and at the final briefing to the president Secretary Christopher was sitting at the side of the president and concurring in the final decision on the bottom-up review.

MR. MCGOVERN: Mr. Secretary, we are currently the world's primary arms seller. Yet, the threat to our vital interests is not of the same dimension as it was when our principal adversary was the Soviet Union. Should not our arms sales be diminished in accordance with that lower level of threat?

SEC. PERRY: I think I would state, first of all, that a principal criterion, the primary criterion, for whether or not to sell arms in any particular instance has to be a geopolitical reason -- has to be geopolitical that takes, first of all, into account the security and stability of the region to which the arms are being sold. And, in particular, we believe now, as we have always belived, that we should not sell arms into a region where the introduction of arms in that region might introduce security instabilities.

The second comment I'd make on that is that while we do not see ourselves being threatened by the Soviet Union -- which does not exist anymore -- and we do not see a comparable threat from Russia, many of our friends and many of our security partners feel that their security situation has actually deteriorated in the last three or four years and feel very much the need for maintaining armed forces, and they look to us -- and they turn to us for the supply of arms for those armed forces. I have no objection to supplying arms to friendly countries, provided that we use first of all a political filter for deciding when to sell

and not an economic filter, and that the security filter needs to be strictly applied. And in particular, I emphasize again, we should not be selling arms to regions where the introduction of those arms might create security problems, might introduce security instabilities.

MR. MCGOVERN: This had to be the last question under the secretary's schedule. Mr. Secretary, can you comment with regard to the security of Saudi Arabia and other states in the Gulf on this matter: What country, other than Iraq, can truly act as the political and military counterweight to Iran?

SEC. PERRY: I don't know that there is another country to act as a political counterweight to Iran. The counterweight is really provided by a combination of factors. Certainly, Israel has a powerful military force in the region, and the Gulf Cooperation Council. No single country, but a number of states in the Gulf region cooperate in a security way. And finally, the United States has alliances and partnerships with many of the nations in the region and the role of the United States provides an important counterweight effect.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. MCGOVERN: Thank you very much, Secretary Perry, for what has been a very thoughtful and candid presentation. We appreciate your presence. And I think that we couldn't have had a more appropriate speaker on the anniversary of Pearl Harbor. Thanks to all of you for joining with us. (Applause.)

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